

CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) An electronic message configured to be communicated between a sender's device and a recipient's device, the electronic message comprising:
  - an attached sound file; and
  - an attached predetermined identifier associated with the sound file, the predetermined identifier comprising:
    - a distinguishing indication configured to distinguish the sound file from other files attached to the electronic message; and
    - a course of action indication configured to indicate a course of action to be taken by the recipient's device with the sound file, the course of action indication comprising an information tag;
  - wherein based on the course of action indicated by the predetermined identifier, the recipient's device is configured to selectively convert a content of the electronic message from text to voice using at least one of the sound file and a locally stored voice sample; and
  - wherein the recipient's device is configured to selectively play at least one of the sound file and the converted content of the electronic message.
2. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said sound file contains at least one word in a sender's voice.
3. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said sound file contains at least one word in a computer simulated voice.
4. (Original) The method of Claim 1 wherein said sound file contains at least one word in a computer simulated voice and at least one word in a sender's voice.
5. - 6. (Cancelled)

7. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1 wherein the information tag is embedded in a header of the electronic message.

8. (Previously Presented) A method for sending an electronic message from a sender's device to a recipient's device, the method comprising the steps of:

attaching a sound file to the electronic message;

associating a predetermined identifier with the sound file and attaching the predetermined identifier to the electronic message, the predetermined identifier comprising:

a distinguishing indication configured to distinguish the sound file from other files attached to the electronic message; and

a course of action indication configured to indicate a course of action to be taken by the recipient's device with the sound file, the course of action indication comprising an information tag;

based on the course of action indicated by the predetermined identifier, selectively converting a content of the electronic message from text to voice using at least one of the sound file and a locally stored voice sample; and

selectively playing at least one of the sound file and the converted content of the electronic message.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 8 wherein said attaching is performed by the sender's device.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 8 wherein said attaching is automatic.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 8 wherein said attaching is performed by an adjunct to the sender's device.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 8 wherein said attaching is performed by an e-mail server.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 8 further comprising:

transmitting the electronic message to the recipient's device, wherein the attaching is performed by the recipient's device.

14. (Original) The method of Claim 8 wherein said sound file contains at least one word in a sender's voice.

15. (Original) The method of Claim 14 wherein said sound file further contains at least one word in a computer simulated voice.

16. (Original) The method of Claim 8 wherein said sound file contains at least one word in a computer simulated voice.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 8 wherein the information tag is embedded in a header of the electronic message.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 18 wherein the information tag is embedded by the sender's device.

20. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 18 wherein the information tag is embedded by an adjunct to the sender's device.

21. (Original) The method of Claim 18 wherein the information tag is embedded by an e-mail server.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 18 wherein the information tag is embedded by the recipient's device.

23. (Original) The method of Claim 18 where said attaching is selectively performed by a sending party.

24. (Previously Presented) A method for announcing electronic messages, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving an electronic message with an attached sound file;  
noting the presence of a predetermined identifier attached to the electronic message, wherein the predetermined identifier comprises:  
    a distinguishing indication configured to distinguish the sound file from other files attached to the electronic message; and  
    a course of action indication configured to indicate a course of action to be taken with the sound file, the course of action indication comprising an information tag;  
based on a course of action indicated by predetermined identifier, selectively converting a content of the electronic message from text to voice using at least one of the sound file and a locally stored voice sample; and  
selectively playing at least one of the sound file and said converted content of the electronic message in response to the noting of the predetermined identifier.

25. (Original) The method of Claim 24 further comprising receiving at least one more electronic message with an attached sound file and playing said at least one more sound file.

26. (Original) The method of Claim 24 wherein said sound file contains at least one word in a sender's voice.

27. (Original) The method of Claim 24 wherein said sound file contains at least one word in a computer simulated voice.

28. (Original) The method of Claim 24 wherein said sound file contains at least one word in a computer simulated voice and at least one word in a sender's voice.

29. (Cancelled)

30. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 24 wherein the information tag regarding the sound file is embedded in a header of the electronic message.

31. (Original) The method of Claim 30 wherein the information tag is embedded by a sender computer.
32. (Original) The method of Claim 30 wherein the information tag is embedded by an adjunct to a computer at a sending party's end.
33. (Original) The method of Claim 30 wherein the information tag is embedded by an e-mail server.
34. (Original) The method of Claim 30 wherein the information tag is embedded by a recipient computer.
35. (Cancelled)
36. (Original) The method of Claim 24 where said playing is performed at a recipient computer.
37. (Original) The method of Claim 24 where said playing is performed at a recipient customer premise equipment.
38. (Original) The method of Claim 24 where said playing is performed at a recipient voice mail.
39. (Cancelled)
40. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 24 where said converting is performed at an e-mail server.
41. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 24 where said converting is performed at a recipient computer.
42. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 24 where said converting is performed at an adjunct to a computer at the receiving party's end.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 24 where said converting is performed at a voice messaging system.

44. (Cancelled)

45. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 24 further comprising transferring said voice message to a voice-mail box.